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## Donuts

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My best friend Kathie's father died today. Her mother unexpectedly passed 3 months prior on the exact day—the 18<sup>th</sup>. She was the rock of the family and her extended family, if not the community. She was a pillar. Stan, was well, at his best, the word donut comes to mind.

He died of complications from a brain tumor that was found twenty years prior and was removed; but made a reoccurrence in the past five years with the accompaniment of radiation, seizures, and everything else that doctors either said would or wouldn't happen. They never really know for sure.

He was a very intelligent and knowledgeable man and the irony that he had a brain tumor was apparent. He always seemed to analyze and demand excellence of his inquisitive and intelligent mind. His slight build did not diminish the size or magnitude of his thoughts or ideas.

He would feed our minds with the scientific biochemical reasons why the grass was green. The aerodynamics, laws of physics and strategies of playing ping pong. He seemed to immerse his mind into every task at hand.

His discerning and critical eye was evident in the photographs he would take on many occasions. Prom night was a virtual photo shoot with the room set-up properly and all the correct photography equipment to execute the best quality of pictures.

He never bragged about all his toys. He just read-up about the best one, purchased it and was diligent to learn to use it properly to create or experience its best use. The toys are only as good as the purchaser. He was not a braggart. But the quality in which he did things demanded bragging.

He was gentle and reserved but had a snickering laugh that lit up his whole face. He had a round open face, one found in many Eastern European countries. He seemed to do everything with his best foot forward. He would yell from the sideline with urgency how to correct my grip and stance at home plate. He cheered when I finally mastered the volleyball serve over the net for 14 consecutive non-returnable serves. I was in my element and groove and he knew it. And he celebrated it, because he seemed to demand excellence and celebrate achievements he knew could be obtained by observations, practice, and perseverance.

He would let me accompany his family to Venetian boat night, the Arboretum, and Tobogganing. All these worlds and events were foreign to me.

But one thing that was not foreign was his Polish accent. I didn't even realize it was an accent. It was just the voice that conveyed the thoughts. The great thoughts that unfortunately are too foreign to contemporary minds. The thoughts that had an unquenchable desire to learn, grow and excel.

But the moment I remember most was on a snowy winter's night in a Chicago

middle class suburb on the corner of 24<sup>th</sup> and Augusta which conjures up the word – donut.

Mr. Berus picked us up from the junior high school gym after returning from a volleyball game. Kathie and I piled in the blue Ford Omni hatchback. The snow was falling heavily. Large flakes were obstructing one's vision. We both sat in the back seat. At one side street intersection he stopped, or that was his plan. But the car spun completely out of control and he reacted quickly to try to regain it. But it spun in a complete 360 degree circle.

It stopped dead center in the middle of the intersection. Our screams of panic were silenced and the car remained there quietly and serene with the gentle cascading winter wonderland flakes outside. He looked back at us and since everyone was okay he said that was fun. We agreed and said let's do it again. And like a little boy, out with his buddies on a winter's evening we proceeded to encourage a donut stop at the next few desolate intersections that followed.

Kathie, Mr. Berus and I laughed and laughed. He shared his buried childhood joy, with his child and her childhood friend. A moment that froze there in time but warms your heart for a lifetime knowing you were sharing a loving moment with those you hold dear and that love must be passed on.

\* \* \*

James passed me a small white bag that held one chocolate covered donut and a small carton of orange juice.

"Here is a little breakfast for you. I was thinking of you. Have a great day today."

"Don't forget a hug. Hugs keep you healthy."

I opened the screen door completely and gave him a great big hug. I loved his smell, that clean from the shower smell with his hair still damp near the nape of his neck. He had on his work overalls and what I liked even better was the way he smelled after he had been working outside all day building, creating new homes. A musty, yet sweet smell. He had an all enveloping hug and I truly felt a surge of phyto-like nutrients course throughout my body.

His "devil-may-care" brown eyes outlined by his high cheekbones looked into my eyes and warmed me for the entire day. I didn't want him to go, but the large red f250 Ford pick-up truck was idling at the curbside calling him to work and the duties of the day. He jumped down the concrete stairs two steps at a time, turned around and blew me a large theatrical kiss.

"Rose, you're the greatest!!"

I laughed. "No you are."

As the truck drove off, in my hand was the donut—the moment of young teenage joy, love, and warmth meant to be passed on.